

# EXHIBIT W

## John McAfee

### Four hours with John McAfee

Exclusive interview with multi-millionaire creator of antivirus software, who went on the run from his Belize home last month



McAfee at his makeshift hideout © Adam Thomson

Adam Thomson DECEMBER 7, 2012

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### The meeting

Belize City bus station is a small building set on a dusty street in the downtown area of the capital. Its only entrance gives on to a long and narrow waiting room with a spine of wooden benches set back to back and two-tone walls on either side – wheat-coloured to the thigh and yellow from there up.

A crisp breeze was blowing through the terminal, which on this Saturday morning was full of Belizeans wrapped in coats and even scarves as they waited for their ride – former US school buses now in their final phase of life – to different corners of this tiny Central American country.

I noticed all of this because I had time on my hands – about an hour, according to the deep, oaky, American voice that had called my mobile a while earlier and told me to wait exactly where I was.

The voice belonged to John McAfee, mathematician, multimillionaire, creator of the ubiquitous McAfee antivirus software, alpha male. Except that in Belize, the country of about 350,000 people to which he had moved four years ago, he was now the focus of a nationwide manhunt – a “person of interest” in an investigation into the recent murder of Gregory Faull, a US citizen and a neighbour of McAfee’s on the picture-postcard island of Ambergris Caye. In other words, McAfee was on the run.

My people-gazing stopped suddenly when I realised that a perfect stranger – middle-aged, medium height, plain clothes – was looking right at me. “A mutual friend would like to see you,” he said with an outstretched hand to take my bag.

The next half an hour was a movie reel of Belizean side streets, back alleys, highways and byways – anything and everything to shake off potential tails. We pulled over and waited for a couple of minutes. A check in the rear-view mirror and we were moving again, zigzagging our way through a string of neighbourhoods – middle-class but only just. And then, just as it all began to seem routine, we stopped again. “Step out of the car, you’re going to cross the road and then keep walking. Somebody will meet you.”



Police officers remove the body of Gregory Faull, found dead on November 11 © Jules Vazquez/AFP/Getty

One hundred yards later, a figure rounded a corner and started walking in my direction. He was white, about 6ft, in a black short-sleeved shirt, black baseball cap, black shorts and those Vibram five-toe shoes popularised by “barefoot” ultra-marathon runners. Only this man was no athlete: he was dragging his right foot, kicking up dust as it trailed behind him. His right arm was bent up, tight like a cooked chicken wing, and his fingers were twisted into a claw. “Follow me, please, sir,” he said. It was McAfee, the most wanted man in the country.

### **The Belize connection**



How a 67-year-old English-born, Virginia-raised multimillionaire ended up on the lam in a Central American country the size of Wales is a long story, or several stories. It is still unclear, for example, why McAfee sold his portfolio of US properties at knock-down prices and headed south in the first place. One theory suggests that it was for tax purposes: after the recession started, McAfee helped spread the word that he had lost almost all of his money. Back in 1994, when he sold his remaining shares in the company that bears his name, this fortune had been estimated at about \$100m.

But Jeff Wise, a journalist who knows McAfee, believes that he did not lose his fortune. Instead, Wise believes that he went to Belize to sidestep a potentially hefty financial payout from a lawsuit after one of the customers at his “aerotrekking” venture died in an accident while at McAfee’s New Mexico property. McAfee was a pioneer of aerotrekking, a sport involving flying souped-up microlight aircraft at breakneck speeds sometimes just a few feet off the ground. He and his flying friends called themselves “sky gypsies”.

Ask McAfee why he moved to Belize and he will tell you that the main reason is the former British colony's unique traits: a Caribbean paradise of white-sand beaches and turquoise seas in which English is the official language; a part of Central America but until recently without the horrendous crime problems of its neighbours; swaths of unspoilt jungle laced with meandering rivers and dotted with ancient Mayan archeological sites. "Who wouldn't want to live here? I mean, get real," McAfee had told me in a phone call before the trip.

The place in which McAfee was now hiding was on the top floor of a block that, from the outside, looked more like an industrial warehouse than a residential building. There was a kitchenette and, beyond that, a single bedroom with a large double bed set on a white-tiled floor, and another door to a small balcony. Decoration was sparse save for a couple of chintzy paintings of rural scenes hanging on the white walls. One of them showed a country lane leading past a thatched cottage surrounded by hollyhocks, foxgloves and other plants you might find in a serene and tranquil English garden.

There was nothing serene or tranquil about McAfee. As soon as he closed the front door, he ditched the limp and the crippled arm. Then, hands trembling, he reached for one of several cigarette packets lying on the table.

"I've been smoking pretty heavily for two weeks," he told me. "Under the same circumstances, you might do the same." He flicked ash nervously out of the semi-open door that led to the balcony. He said he was averaging 15 a day. A quick calculation later on suggested that 30 would be more accurate.

His distress, and that of Samantha, his feisty 20-year-old Belizean girlfriend – during the interview, she accused me of being scared: "I'm young and smaller than you and I've got more balls" – was more than understandable given the saga that their lives had become over the previous few weeks.



McAfee with his 20-year-old Belizean girlfriend, Samantha, who went on the run with him © Adam Thomson

To start with, there were the first nights sleeping rough and on the run on the island of Ambergris Caye, where he has property close to that of Faull, whose body was discovered on November 11 lying face up in a pool of blood. There was a gunshot wound to his head and police found a 9mm shell casing next to the body.

McAfee lifted his shirt to reveal an impressively toned torso covered in mosquito bites. “I slept all over,” he explained. “In my house, in the bush, at my condo, I just kept moving constantly. It is very uncomfortable to sleep at night in the jungle.”

Then there was the escape from the island itself. The idea had been to get to the house of a friend, who would then take him and Samantha across the 30-mile stretch of water that separates the island from the mainland. “So we got to the house, everything was set and the engine wouldn’t start on the boat. And you can hear the police sirens as they’re going by. I’m looking through these big cracks through the walls to see if anyone is coming, looking to see if there is anywhere we can hide.”

Amid all the panic, his friend with the boat had to go to town to get some spare parts. Engine mended, they then discovered that there was no petrol. “That was the scariest part,” he recalled. “The police were looking for us everywhere.”



The obvious question was, why run at all? After all, the police had said that there were no charges against McAfee yet. “He is still just a person of interest” in the investigation, Raphael Martinez, a police spokesperson, told me. “We are still looking for him.” (Asked why they had not found him, Martinez said, “It beats the hell out of me.”)

Besides, McAfee insisted that he had nothing to do with Faull’s murder and that in spite of being neighbours – their houses were about 300 yards apart – he barely even knew the man. “He drank and I don’t hang with people who drink,” he said. He also reminded me that Belize was not as safe as people thought. I had already checked the statistics: according to United Nations figures, the country’s murder rate has risen rapidly, from about 16 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2000 to more than 41 in 2010.

For many people, the answer was that McAfee was paranoid. Or as Dean Barrow, Belize’s prime minister, suggested a couple of weeks ago in statements made in Belize City to a local reporter, McAfee might simply be “bonkers”.



McAfee’s abandoned home on the island of Ambergris Caye © Reuters

The inspiration for that assessment came in part from locals on Ambergris Caye, many of whom painted a picture of an increasingly insular McAfee, rarely venturing from his blue-roofed beach compound on the northern part of the island where armed guards kept vigil. Neighbours, including Faull, had complained about his numerous dogs, which barked at passersby, while rumours had been circulating, and with increasing speed, about his cavorting with young women and, above all, about drugs.

McAfee, who feeds on attention, didn’t help to suppress the rumours. Two years ago, and for several months, he posted regularly on Bluelight.ru, a Russian-registered drug-aficionados forum, claiming to have rediscovered the formula for “tan” MDPV, a narcotic

that wowed the drug community when it first appeared in the early 2000s and then acquired semi-mythical status following its disappearance shortly afterwards.

From his hide-out, McAfee admitted to authoring the posts but also said that they were a hoax, a practical joke – the inevitable result of being a “prankster”. He said that he gave up all drugs and even alcohol 30-odd years previously. That tallies with other accounts: people who knew him and worked with him closely back then recall that there was never any alcohol at his company parties and that, in the typical style of someone who had at one time taken plenty of narcotics – “There is not a drug I have not taken,” he told me in Belize – he would often “preach” about how bad drugs were.

Samantha brought us some lunch from the impossibly small kitchen. It was a plate each of tightly rolled tacos filled with beef and thick-cut salsa. McAfee stubbed out his cigarette and, between mouthfuls, he told me that he had decided to run because he felt that tension had been mounting between him and the authorities ever since he moved, a couple of years previously, from the touristy Ambergris Caye to the jungle interior of the country. “I was the only white man living full-time in a district of 30,000 people,” he said. “And that was a mistake. It became clear that I had money. I had automobiles, I had houses, I had things that other people did not have. And so suddenly, I became a target.”

A wealthy man living in a small, isolated and poor community provided fabulous employment opportunities for many locals. There were jobs in construction work and to provide security, gardening and maintenance of the properties. But there were also the ventures that McAfee set up, like the Studio 54 bar in Carmelita village, which he paid for and then let others administer. During a stay in Carmelita the night before the interview, I was told that McAfee was spending about US\$6,000 a week on his local payroll. But it also created plenty of bad blood for those who either failed to get “in” with him or, worse, got a job only to lose it later for one reason or another.





McAfee properties in Carmelita, inland Belize. McAfee says his move here led to tensions with authorities

More important, McAfee claimed that living in the interior of the country had brought him into direct contact with local circles of power, which he insisted saw in him a once-in-a-lifetime chance to line their pockets. He gave. But he also believed that he had annoyed the authorities by giving in kind – goods, property, equipment – instead of handing out cash. “No one can skim,” he said. “Instead of giving \$5m to the government, I gave it to the people. So suddenly, [it’s] like, ‘Where the f\*\*\* is my share? You should have given it to us and we will buy the stuff.’ So that they will take the \$5m and buy \$50,000 worth of stuff and then give the rest to their families. So I didn’t do that. I didn’t play by the rules. It pissed everybody off.”

McAfee argued that the breaking point came in April when members of the Gang Suppression Unit, a division of the police force created in response to Belize’s rapidly rising crime rate, stormed his jungle compound. “That’s when I knew I was in trouble,” he said, lifting another taco to his mouth. Police said they were looking for illegal weapons and drugs. According to Martinez, they found some guns but no illegal drugs. He also said that no charges were filed against McAfee.

Today, the jungle compound, which served as McAfee’s house and laboratory where he was developing topical antiseptics, is gated and the doors of the eight or so houses on the riverfront property, all built on stilts and constructed from local hardwoods with palm-leaf roofs, are boarded up. All of his personal belongings have also been moved out. I came across some of them at a nearby house on a different property that McAfee had said was empty and where I could stay the night. On the phone, he described it as “very comfortable”.

And it was. But it was also basic and hardly a millionaire’s dream house. Constructed in a similar design to his houses in the jungle compound, it consisted of one main space with a

counter top or bar separating the living room from the kitchen. To the side, there were a couple of tiny rooms sectioned off by white walls.

I slept in one of them. It had a small, rustic four-poster bed and the largest flatscreen television set I could recall seeing. There was a yellow notepad with some of his handwriting on it. It read: “Lesson 6: Solving systems by graphing”. There was also a leather-bound edition of Robert A. Heinlein’s science-fiction classic, *Stranger in a Strange Land*. No kidding.

### **Computer genius**

McAfee was born in 1945 in England to an English mother and a US soldier fighting in the second world war. He described his father as “an alcoholic and abusive”. When McAfee was two the family moved to the US to a small town in Virginia, and into a society that he described as “very conservative, provincial, Christian: I had to go to chapel every week on Wednesday”. As if to ram home the point, he said, “I was an altar boy. I could probably quote the Bible from beginning to end.” To my surprise, he started to do just that and then interrupted himself with a “I never believed it.”

School friends remember McAfee as pleasant, fun, fond of pranks but never to the extent of being a troublemaker. They also remember him as being good at school, in particular at maths, the subject he ended up studying at the nearby Roanoke College.



McAfee pictured in 1989, holding a stethoscope to a 'poorly' computer © John Storey/ Getty

He graduated in 1967, did a year of further maths studies at Virginia Tech and then stopped to think. “What am I doing studying mathematics?” he remembered asking himself. “I’m going to a place where other people told me to go.” So he said he dropped out, packed his bags and embarked on a life of adventure with a first stop, in 1969, at 11th and Broadway in New York. He landed squarely on his feet, getting a job there at Nasa – “I learned computers well and, from that experience, computers were just a natural for me.” The rest of the time, he said he just spent getting stoned and watching bands at the Fillmore East rock venue.

During the heady days of the late 1980s McAfee became one of the computer era’s brightest stars. He breezed through a string of jobs in the tech industry, from a position at Xerox to working for Lockheed in California. That was when he came across a report of a virus. “My brother-in-law was reading a piece in the paper about a thing called the Pakistani brain, the world’s first computer virus. I go, ‘Let me see that,’ I snatch the newspaper out of his hands, read it and I started thinking, ‘What the f\*\*\*?’ And then it came to me: ‘Oh, I know how they did this.’ And as soon as I saw how they did it, I saw how you could solve it ... I know computers.”

He phoned Dennis Yelle, a brilliant programmer, and asked him if he could write the code. He couldn’t remember but thought he had paid him \$200 for the work. “Within six

hours he had the program,” recalled McAfee. “A week later, I had McAfee. That was it. That is how it started.”

McAfee’s genius lay not only in working out how to combat and eliminate the virus but also in his decision, and at a time when every software company in the world was obsessed with protecting their products, to give his antivirus program away for free.

“I didn’t think there would be any more [viruses],” he said. “And I thought, that’s a flash in the pan. I’ll get this out for free and I’ll make a name ... Well, I did make a name but then, immediately, more viruses cropped up ... I called Dennis and said, ‘This is a completely different affair, but we can use the same program, here is what you have to do.’ Within a day, he had the program, I had it out and by then we were the number one antivirus provider because I gave it away for free. I didn’t sell it. Freeware. Take it, use it. Copy it.”

The model was simple: get the program installed on to everyone’s computers, make a name, attract companies to use it and then charge the companies for the updates. “Eight months after I started, there was \$10m in the bank.”



© Adam Thomson

McAfee crossed his long, sinewy legs and lit up yet another cigarette. He appeared a little more relaxed than when I had arrived several hours previously, and seemed to be enjoying the memories. After the initial success the money was pouring in so fast, he said, that the bottom drawer in his filing cabinet at work was stuffed with cheques for \$1,000 or less. “I didn’t have time to take them to the bank. There must have been \$50,000 in that drawer.”

At the insistence of his then partner, McAfee said that he moved out of his one-bedroom place in Santa Clara, in the heart of Silicon Valley, and into a \$5m mansion in Santa Cruz. She also urged him to swap his beaten-up Datsun Z series sports car for a top-of-the-line Mercedes-Benz. “I could care less ... two beat-up cars would have been fine for me.” The longer McAfee talked, the stronger the impression grew that money had been at once a liberation and a burden to him. One mistake, he said, was building so many different properties around the world – at least 20. “The South Padre Island one? I spent \$5m building it. I was there for a week. That’s how ridiculous life becomes ... it’s a f\*\*\*ing nightmare.”

Inevitably, perhaps, he discovered yoga, which he embraced in the 1990s, establishing a yoga retreat in Colorado and even writing several books on the subject. One reviewer on Amazon.com described McAfee’s 2001 *Into the Heart of Truth: The Spirit of Relational Yoga* as “profoundly illuminating... the author is talking to nearly everyone that I know – he’s certainly talking to me.” But, as with most other things, he got bored of that, too, and began to look for the next big thing.

McAfee admitted that life on the run was tough. But it was also clear that he fed off the drama, the media attention and the uncertainty of what the next day would bring. Change and upheaval had been persistent themes in his life; now he was living them to the extreme. In that spirit, I had little doubt that he embellished many of his stories.

McAfee told me that he intended to leave Belize in the following few days. He sketched out a plan, how he would make the break and where he might go. But I also knew that he was living day to day and that his plans could and would change.

We took some pictures, shook hands and said our farewells. There was just one more question, though: “Do you have McAfee antivirus on your computer?” He looked at me and put down his cigarette. “I take it off,” he said. “It’s too annoying.”

*As FT Weekend Magazine went to press, [McAfee turned up in Guatemala](#), making his first public appearance in almost a month. His claim for asylum there was rejected by the authorities. Barring a successful last-minute appeal, he will be deported to Belize. McAfee was taken to hospital briefly on Thursday after suffering hypertension*

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